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# INFLUENCE OF THE COLLEGE IN AMERICAN LIFE.

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THE American college has rendered a service of greater value to American life in training men than in promoting scholarship. It has affected society more generally and deeply through its graduates than through its contributions to the sciences. Its work for America and for the world has been done at second-hand through the men whom it has educated. It has been rather a mother of men than a nurse of scientists.

In judging of the value of the service which the college has rendered to society through its sons, of course one must not be guilty of claiming too much. The college is only one of the factors which help to develop the character and the working power of an individual. The home, personal association, environment, and native ability are always to be weighed and assessed. Many men "of light and leading" would still have been guides of their fellows even if they had never gone to college. Yet the college has rendered unique and peculiarly rich services. It has in nearly every instance increased ability, and made ability more efficient. It has rendered indifferent ability good, good better, and given a superlative excellence to that of a higher degree.

Of all the professions, the ministry enrolls the largest proportion of college graduates. An examination of Dr. Sprague's *Annals of the American Pulpit* shows that of the eleven hundred and seventy clergymen therein named, 74 per cent. of those who are Episcopalian, 78 per cent. of those who are Presbyterian, 80 per cent. of those who are Congregational, and 97 per cent. of those who are Unitarian clergymen are graduates. The influence of the minister in a

community is, in a degree, the influence of the college and that influence has been from the birth of the nation great. In the very beginning the minister was the autocrat, both civil and social, of the commonwealth. He has now ceased to be an autocrat, but his influence continues strong and pervasive. Of all the members of the community he is the only one who has the opportunity of speaking to the people at frequent and regular intervals upon important questions. The decline of the lyceum system has left him practically alone in the forum of public debate. If he give to his functions a large interpretation, he finds himself closely related to all the higher concerns of humanity. He is, above most citizens, interested and influential in the public-school system. He is the arbiter upon many questions of social and civil relationships. In all sociological concerns his counsel may be of great value. Above most persons in the community, he is a scholar. Aside, therefore, from his purely professional relations, the clergyman is or may be of great influence. In all instances the college has trained in him qualities which at least greatly enlarge his field of usefulness and enrich his power of service. In the rural parish as well as in the urban his influence is greater because he has had four years in college. The power of the clergyman, therefore, is the power of the college.

The colleges have ceased to be, as several of the earlier colleges were designed in their foundations to be, training schools for the ministry. The callings of the law and of commercial life are now more attractive to the graduates of certain colleges. But the college has not yet lost its prestige as being the most valuable opportunity for the men who propose to be ministers to fit themselves for their work, be their number small or large. Under a government in which the state and the church and the college are more normally and generally united than these agencies are in the United States, the college usually represents a necessary condition to the assuming of clerical functions. The Church of England would have lost its power, and the minister in that church his influence, if Oxford and Cambridge had not existed. Writing to Mr. Gladstone, in 1854, Dean Burgon referred to Oxford and her colleges as "those fortresses where the Church has ever nursed her warriors, and whither she has never turned in vain for a champion in her hour of need." The English Church commands the respect of those

whose respect is most worth commanding, largely through the contributions of manifold sorts which the English universities have made to it. In America it is significant that the churches which have been most influential in the development of American life have been those which have placed greatest emphasis upon the worth of a college-bred ministry. It is also evident that as the churches themselves have attached greater or less importance to the necessity of a college training for their ministers, has their influence increased or diminished. At the time when the Methodist Church did not regard a college training as desirable for securing ordination, the influence of that church was small. Only 11 per cent. of the Methodist clergymen named in Dr. Sprague's volumes are graduates. But at the present time, when the Methodist Church regards a liberal education as a valuable element in the clergyman's equipment, the public influence of this church is greatly increasing.

The large majority of the lawyers of the United States are not college-bred ; but it is not too much to say that the influence of those who are is greater than that of the remainder who are not. The highest positions in the courts of the United States, or in the courts of the individual States, are usually filled by those who have had an academic education. Every Chief Justice of the United States has been a college graduate except one ; and that one, John Marshall, was a student at the College of William and Mary until the outbreak of the Revolution interrupted his undergraduate career. More than two-thirds of the associate judges of the Supreme Court and about two-thirds of the present Circuit Court judges are college graduates. At the present time every member of our Supreme Court has received a liberal education. Conspicuously among the professions, the law demands the power of applying fundamental principles to the solution of complex problems. Every case submitted to a lawyer represents an opportunity for an application of the law of rights. The lawyer, therefore, should have clearness of mental vision, a thorough understanding of principles, facility in the application of these principles, and above all else the power of analysis. No better means for developing such powers exists than the college.

Our great system of public education is a sphere in which the influence of the college is not usually recognized. It is often supposed that the teacher in the primary, or grammar, or high

school, is jealous of the college professor and that the college professor has a contempt for the school teacher. But what is called the lower and what is called the higher education are but two parts of one great scheme, each ministering unto, and each receiving ministry from, the other. If the work in the primary grades be slovenly, superficial, weak, the teaching in higher grades is also slovenly, superficial, weak, and ineffective. If the college fail to be effective, strong, inspiring, wholesome, all the education that comes before the college period falls into methods of narrowness and superficiality. The kindergarten is a preparation for the physical laboratory, and the physical and psychological laboratories of the college have close relations to the kindergarten.

Historically the college has had a great influence in the development of our educational system. Harvard College was founded eleven years before the passage of the law requiring those towns in the Bay Colony having one hundred families to be able to fit students for college. It was a graduate of Brown University who became the founder of Antioch College, who did the greatest work for the common schools ever done by any American. Massachusetts and every commonwealth owe a lasting debt of gratitude to Horace Mann. The educational system of Indiana is the product of the influence of Caleb Mills, who for many years was a professor in Wabash College. At the present time the college, and especially the college in the West, is doing a great work in upholding the higher standards of the public-school system. The forces that are constantly trying to pull down these standards are tremendous. The tendency of the age to reach practical results by the shortest pathways carries along with itself the peril of ethical and intellectual superficiality. Against this tendency the college stands firm as the everlasting hills. Although only a small proportion of the teachers of the United States are college-trained, yet many of them have been taught by those who are college-trained. They have felt the inspiration of the motives, and have been affected in a measure by the character, of those who have been inspired themselves by college ideals, moved by college motives and influenced by college conditions. The superintendents and supervisors of many schools are college graduates, as are the teachers in many high schools. Therefore, not a few students who are obliged to finish their education with the high school

have received an influence from the college at one remove. Even beyond the personal influence, the college system, as a system, has touched the public-school system. It has held before the schools standards of learning, larger in content, and higher in aim, than the schools could themselves create.

The college, further, has embodied a broad and noble patriotism. This patriotism has been free from provincialism. The college has interpreted "country," not as representing square miles of territory or loyalty to a partisan government, but as meaning justice for all, helpfulness toward the worthy or the weak, sympathy for the oppressed and opportunity for the working out of noblest results under favorable conditions. It has sought that just government might prevail; that toleration of opinions might become common. It has endeavored to incarnate the cardinal virtues in the state. No youth has been more eager than the college youth to doff the student's gown and to don the soldier's uniform. It has been said that, except for Harvard College, the Revolution would have been put off half a century. Of the great war no stories are more moving, no tales of valor more splendid than those told of the college boys who became soldiers. It is significant that in the petition for the granting of the charter of Union College a hundred years ago, attention is called to the need in the young Republic of men qualified to lead in the state as well as in the church; and Union College, be it said, has furnished a great number of men who have rendered efficient service to the nation. The constitution of North Dakota was partly the work of a graduate of a college in Wisconsin. Of the men who have been influential in the affairs of Rhode Island in the last century and a half, only three can be mentioned who have not been graduates of Brown University, and these three were connected with the university in such a way as to feel its influence. The motto of the college graduate is not "My country, right or wrong." Rather he loves his country, and is willing to die or live for it, as it embodies those principles which represent eternal and infinite relationships. He loves his country more because he loves the world much. The college has, moreover, rendered great service in upholding the ideas of a simple democracy. The college is, along with the public school, the most democratic of our institutions. It exists for the people. If the college is a part of

the system of public education, it exists as a part of the commonwealth. If it is a private corporation, it is private in no sense other than that it represents private property held in trust for public weal. The ordinary college represents the bestowment of a large amount of property for the improvement of the people. It embodies the power of promoting scholarship as a means for the elevation of humanity. The principles dominant in the college are principles of our common citizenship. It is not wealth nor birth, prestige nor family, which opens the doors of the college, but it is the simple desire to use the facilities offered by the college for the enlargement and enrichment of character and of life. The college finds its best conditions in a democratic community. But the college in turn tends to develop democracy in the community. The English universities failed for centuries to have a worthy influence in English life because of ecclesiasticism. The American college is the creation of the democratic commonwealth. The American college in turn tends to make the democratic commonwealth yet more democratic. It is still true, as the late President Anderson said in an address given at the time of his inauguration forty-two years ago: "Universities have been everywhere the nurseries of equality. The single fact that for centuries their endowments gave to the sons of the poor their only available opportunity to measure their strength with the rich and noble on equal terms, shows that they have had more influence in giving to man a superiority over his accidents than any institution except the Christian Church. Universities have been the special benefactors of the poor. We believe that accurate statistics would show that more than two-thirds of the students who in our country have gone through a course of collegiate education, have been the sons of men in comparative poverty. To these has the main benefit of the university endowments inured. These conditions alone have prevented the monopoly of education from being secured to the rich."\*

The story of the political or public achievements wrought by the American college for the community through its graduates is a long and glorious one. It is worth while possibly to present a few statistics. In suggesting the great part which college men have played in national affairs, it is

\* Papers and addresses of Martin B. Anderson, volume 1, pages 44-5.

not unworthy to mention that clergymen, teachers, and physicians are by their occupations usually prevented from entering political life. The proportion, therefore, of college men who are found rendering conspicuous service to the nation becomes exceedingly significant. Of the fifty-six signers of the Declaration of Independence, forty-two had a liberal education. Three members of the committee of five appointed to draft the Declaration—Jefferson, Adams, and Livingston—were college-bred. At least thirty-five of the fifty-five men who composed the Convention of 1787, which framed the Constitution, had had the advantage of a classical education. The men who were most influential in the struggle which resulted in the adoption of the Constitution were men trained at college. Of our Presidents, fifteen are college graduates; and thirteen also of the Vice-Presidents. An examination of the biographical sketches of Congressmen proves that one-half of those who have served in the United States Senate have been college-trained, and somewhat more than one-third of those who have been members of the House of Representatives. When one considers the relatively small proportion of the citizens of this country who have been members of its colleges in the last hundred years—about three hundred thousand—the influence of the college men in the whole community is proved to be commanding.

The American college has given to the American people a discipline more thorough, a scholarship richer, and a culture finer than they otherwise could have received. I use these words discipline, scholarship, and culture not without discrimination. The college has trained men to think—to think for themselves and to think for others. Such training is usually obtained within the first two years of the course. It is the result of pursuing the mathematical, linguistic, and scientific studies. These studies are a first-rate gymnastic for the student; they produce intellectual strength. The college using them becomes a drill master, and the student having the advantage of the discipline given through them becomes keen and broad in vision, swift and constant to infer, true and impressive in applying and using. Such advantages are the best results of what we now call the old New England country college, and indeed of the college, be it new or old, whether within New England or without.



If the chief value of the services of the American college lies in the training of men, we are yet to bear in mind that the college has been the greatest of all contributors to scholarship. If we must confess—as indeed we must—that the American college has not achieved in scholarship what it has in discipline, or what the English universities and German have achieved, yet it is to be affirmed that whatever scholarship we may claim has found in the college its fostering mother. Many, though by no means all, of the advances which have been made in our knowledge of the laws of nature have been made under the patronage of the college, even if they have not been directly made by its officers. Most of the researches into the condition of early races of this country or of the Latin and Greek peoples, or of the natives of the far East, have found in the college their chief supporters and leaders. Archæological museums are usually organized in connection with colleges. Our acquaintance with the literature of the Roman and Greek peoples—the two peoples which, together with the Hebrew, have most vitally affected modern civilization—is derived largely through the college. Without the college, scholarship would be bereft of its most useful agency and its most healthful condition. The American scholar has usually, though by no means always, been an officer in the American college. The college library has been his workshop, the college laboratory his tool, the college desk his pulpit, and in the name and prestige of the college he has found a presumption in his own behalf as a scholar. Should one choose to mention the ten Americans who have contributed most largely to the progress of natural and physical science, eight of the ten would be found enrolled in the faculties of our colleges. The greatest American linguists, as well as the greatest American mathematicians, our greatest philosophers and psychologists, and several of our ablest economists and historians are found as teachers in our colleges.

The American college has possibly done more in laying foundations for culture than in directly cherishing culture ; for the American college has been so deeply concerned with the primary disciplines that it has found little opportunity for affording to its students means and methods of the deepest enrichment. But it has given impulses ; it has awakened aspirations ; it has put before the student standards of taste ; it has trained intellectual judgment ; it has given to the great law of right a new

value by showing the breadth of its application and the height of its reach ; it has sought to create a refinement which is purchased neither by the elimination of robustness nor by the introduction of over-critical æstheticism ; it has tried to train each man to love the best in literature, in music, in painting, in nature, in humanity ; and it has striven constantly to cause the student to distinguish in everything, not simply the good from the bad, but, what is far more difficult, the better from the best.

This service of the American college in training men to live intellectual lives is of the greatest worth to this country and to this age. For, in this age and country of materialism, the college should minister to the things of the mind. The college should not directly attempt to stem the tide of materialism. The attempt would be useless. But the college may worthily hope to transmute the capacity for this material enthusiasm, even if not the enthusiasm itself, into a capacity for holding and delighting in relations which are eternal, spiritual, and ethical.

When one attempts to estimate the value of the college as a means of promoting literature, the task is, at first thought, a difficult one. For in any list of the writers of any one time and place, the number of college-trained men would not be found to exceed the number of those who have not received a college training ; but when one passes out into the relations of a century and of a whole nation, the difficulty vanishes. It seems, of course, a rule of thumb to judge of the worth of the contribution which the college makes to literature through the number of authors it has trained, or even through the greatness of these authors. But the method has value. Of course, in general, the great worth of the contribution which the college makes to literature is to be measured by the extent to which the college maintains literary standards, inspires literary motives, and by the degree in which it cherishes literary atmospheres and conditions. And it may at once be said that the large number of the great authors of the country are college-bred. The inference is inevitable that the college has had a large share in the creation of literature. It would be generally acknowledged that of the five or six men who are regarded by common suffrages as the greatest poets of America, four out of the five, or five out of the six, are college-trained. No one also would hesitate to say that of the five greatest historians of America, all are also college-trained. It

is significant, too, that they are all the sons of one mother. The first romancer, Hawthorne, and the first essayist, Emerson, are the sons of New England colleges. The great writers upon philosophical, ethical, and theological subjects represent with hardly an exception an academic training. In the large relations of time, it is the author of college training and enlargement who is recognized as the ablest and best. In England, the same condition, and even more signally, obtains. As one reads the biographies of her great authors, one seldom fails to find references to Cambridge, the mother of great men, or to Oxford, her sister, the mother of great movements.

America has made great contributions to the higher civilization of the world, but these contributions have usually been indirect. But she has made none more valuable than are found in the missionary movements of the Christian Church. These movements have been genuine and large endeavors for the establishing of a high type of civilization in countries not so richly blessed as our own. They represent the elements of the finest civilization. They include the teaching of the principles and the example of the monogamous family, the worship of one God, the institution of schools and colleges, the creation of a written language, and, to some extent, of a literature. Missionaries have reduced to writing some seventy languages, twenty-six of which are to be put to the credit of an American missionary society. In all these languages, a literature is either beginning, or is already somewhat advanced. Such labors represent linguistic and literary triumphs of a rare and exceedingly high order. And at once it is to be said that these missionaries who have been the bearers of civilization to South Sea Islanders and to degraded peoples in all parts of the globe, have, with few exceptions, found their most valuable training for this great service in the American college. It has been and is the policy of the foreign missionary boards to send to the lowest people the best-trained college man or woman. The American college, therefore, represents the greatest and most direct work which America has done for the world. The American college of poverty, of meagre equipment, of few teachers, as well as the mighty university of prestige, of eminence, of wealth, of vast numbers, has had a share in this magnificent service.

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